



HARFORD COUNTY DEPUTY SHERIFF'S UNION

Incorporated 1989

PO Box 881, Bel Air, Maryland 21014

Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation

January 27, 2022

Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair

Miller Senate Office Building

3 West Street Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Senate Bill 115 – Law Enforcement Officer's Pension System – Benefits

Dear Senator Guy Guzzone and Distinguished Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

On behalf of over 300 members of the Harford County Deputy Sheriff's Union (HCDSU), I thank you for the opportunity to propose legislation that will not only improve the lives of sworn deputies of the Harford County Sheriff's Office, but many police officers across the state.

As everyone knows, our country has changed, and members of society have become increasingly more violent. In our very own communities and across our nation, respect for law enforcement has diminished, causing police officers to be challenged, confronted and murdered. This is evident from the 157-law enforcement, non-covid, line of duty deaths in 2021.

These conditions have resulted in many police officers leaving the profession and the drastic reduction of young competent candidates from seeking a career path in law enforcement. This consequence is not good for anyone in the community or law enforcement.

Therefore, we need to do more now to ensure we are continuing to hire the most qualified and prepared members of society to handle the stressors of becoming Law Enforcement Officers. Although money is not the driving force of why most choose this career path, it is a consideration and an adequate and attainable pension in retirement could be a large attraction for would be applicants.

In response to these expressed concerns and on behalf of the Harford County Deputy Sheriff's Union, I am proposing an improvement of the retirement benefits. The Harford County Sheriff's Office is currently enrolled in the Maryland State Retirement System, under the Law Enforcement Officers Pension plan, known as LEOPS. Also, in LEOPS are approximately 22 other state, and local agencies; to include Maryland Transportation Authority and Natural Resources Police.

Currently, the LEOPS retirement guidelines are as follows. At 25 years of service, members will receive 2% of their average final salary, for every year of service. So at 25 years, the member will receive 50% of their average highest three or five years' salary, based on the year hired. Members also have an option to max out the benefit at 32.5 years of service with a retirement benefit of 65% of their salary.

Although Harford County Sheriff's Office and Maryland Transportation Authority are a state agency, the LEOPS program retirement benefit is noticeably lower than other state law enforcement agencies,

such as the Maryland State Police who accumulate 2.55 % per year. While participating agencies of LEOPS applaud Maryland State for ensuring the State Police has such a competitive pension system, the purpose of this proposed legislation is to bring the agencies enrolled in LEOPS closer to parity with the State Police.

Therefore, the HCDSU proposes to increase the earned percentage per year to 2.50, allowing members to earn 62.5% at 25 years and a max earning at 28 years of 70%. It should be noted that union members and other LEOPS stakeholders understand that this increase could result in a slightly higher contribution rate.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this legislation and on behalf of the members of the Harford County Deputy Sheriff's Union, I am requesting the members of the Budget and Taxation Committee vote FAVORABLY for Senate Bill 115.

Sincerely,

[Aaron Penman](#)

Aaron Penman, President

Harford County Deputy Sheriff's Union

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